

AMHERST Massachusetts

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STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF ARTICLES 24 – 25: VILLAGE CENTER REZONING John P. Musante, Town Manager Annual Town Meeting – May 9, 2012

• Promotes Sustainability

I strongly urge Town Meeting to support Articles 24 & 25. The North Amherst and Atkins Corner rezoning proposals are about shaping the future development of those areas in ways that are most positive for the neighbors and the community, in keeping with Amherst's Master Plan. Development and redevelopment of those areas is inevitable, and this is our opportunity to make sure that development will conform to our community values of reducing sprawl, protecting farmland and open space, and encouraging sustainability in ways that enhance our quality of life. North Amherst and Atkins Corners deserve the protections of appropriate development that will provide space to live, work, eat and shop, while encouraging walking and bicycling and decreasing reliance on cars. In short, as those areas get developed, we want them to feel more like smaller versions of our beautiful downtown, and not like the car-oriented strip malls of some of our less-charming intersections.

• A Thorough Process = Balanced Result

This village center rezoning process has taken a full year, with extensive community input and public participation and regular check-ins. The proposal is a balanced representation of all of the community's often competing interests.

• Responsive to Community Input → Changes Since Last Fall

As a result of Town Meeting's response to the proposed rezoning last fall, and continued review and revision by the Planning Board, the proposed rezoning is substantially different:

- <u>Two Articles</u> Dividing the rezoning into two articles (#24 & 25) will allow Town Meeting to vote on changes in each village center separately.
- <u>Area of Rezoning Reduced</u> The areas proposed to be rezoned as Village Centers cover a much smaller area.
- <u>Regulations Adjusted</u> The proposed regulations have been made more stringent for apartments and townhouses, and better address important issues like public transportation,

handicapped accessibility and street trees while retaining multiple layers of state and local environmental review and control over any development proposed near a critical resource area.

• Balances Community Land Use Approach

Amherst has responsibly protected its critical open lands for more than 50 years. But development has to happen somewhere, so our choice is smart growth or sprawl. Smart growth directs development to our built areas and is responsive to community priorities and values. Sprawl results from development happening wherever and however it is allowed, without connection to its surroundings or to any larger vision for the area. I believe this rezoning is long overdue as a step toward balancing Amherst's approach to determining its future. Please join me and a unanimous Planning Board and Select Board in support of Articles 24 & 25.